

ABRAM'S CALL; OR, HALF-WAY AND ALL THE WAY NO. 2011

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 26, 1888,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there."
Genesis 11:31.*

*"And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."
Genesis 12:5.*

AFTER the Flood, when men began to multiply and increase in the earth, it was not very long before they began to turn aside from the living and true God. At first the sons of Noah walked in the light of divine knowledge, though even among them was found an evil seed. When scattered over the earth after the confusion of tongues at Babel, the earth's hoary fathers carried with them a measure of the knowledge of God which they had received from their sires, but after a while, the light grew dim, men began to worship the sun and the moon, and they adored fire as the mystic symbol of the mysterious and spiritual Lord. They sought out many inventions, and having once begun to quit their allegiance to the one God, they very rapidly traveled along the downgrade till they worshipped strange gods. It was sad that although the earth produced its mighty hunters, and men built city after city, yet few among them sought after God, or built altars to His name. Well might the Lord God cry out, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me."

A long period passed without a voice from God. Man seemed left to himself, and in danger of being given up to idols. The nations wandered each a different way, but all the downward road. Yet grace had not ended its reign, and therefore, before the lamp of God had wholly gone out, the Lord determined to reveal Himself, and establish His worship in the world. He would select a family to be His peculiar servants; He would manifest Himself to the father of that family, and would make with him a covenant. He would reveal to him the great things which He intended to do in the fullness of time, and He would bid him hand down the revelation to his children from generation to generation. This family should grow into a nation, and to that nation should be committed the oracles of God. Out of that nation should come prophets, and priests, and heroes, who should believe in God and maintain the true faith against all comers, even until the Son of God Himself should come to manifest the glory of God in a preeminent degree. In the midst of that nation the Lord resolved to set up ordinances, and a settled organization, by which truth should be taught through type and symbol, and by the hallowed speech of godly men. This, in His wisdom, He judged to be best for the future of the race.

In the wise sovereignty of His choice, the Lord chose Abram and his house. He gives no account of his matters, and we cannot, therefore, tell why he took out of Ur of the Chaldees those of whom Joshua says, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor, and they served other gods." The Lord called Abram alone, and blessed him. He set apart the Patriarch and his seed, and put them in trust with the priceless treasure of divine revelation; this they kept for themselves and for the rest of mankind.

It was needful that the elect family should be led apart and kept from the contamination of surrounding evil. Abram must come out from Ur of the Chaldees, and all its associations of idolatry, and he must even leave his kindred and his father's house, and walk before the Lord in separation unto prompt obedience and complete consecration. Thus in his separation unto God would be fulfilled the gracious pur-

pose of the Most High. The Lord's end and aim was to keep His truth alive in the world by means of a people who should be set apart for that service; and it was therefore essential that the person chosen to be the head of that family, the founder of that nation, should come right away from all connection with the corrupt world, and walk apart with God. The chosen nation was to dwell alone, and not to be numbered among the peoples. Hence came that call which said to Abram, "Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you: and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing."

At this moment God is working in much the same manner in the midst of the world by His church. A church is an assembly called out. An *ecclesia* is not any and every "assembly"; a mixed crowd of unauthorized persons, having no special right to come together would not be an *ecclesia*, or church. In a real *ecclesia* the herald summoned the citizens by trumpet or by name, and it consisted of certain persons called out from among the common multitude. The true church consists of men, who are called, and faithful, and chosen. They are redeemed from among men, and called out from among their fellows by effectual grace. God the Holy Spirit continues to call out, and bring to the Lord Jesus, those who are chosen of God according to the good pleasure of His will. Practically, conversion is the result of the call—"Get you out from your country." It is a repetition of that searching word, "Come you out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." The church is a repetition of the camp of Abram in the midst of Canaan. It is the Lord's portion among men, and it keeps His oracles. The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth and it is the design of God to find a home for His gospel in His church, till the dispensation of grace shall close, and the Judge shall ascend the throne.

In gathering instruction from the call and out coming of Abram, I shall handle the matter by making three remarks. First, *this call is often only half obeyed*. In our first text we find the command of God very partially carried out. Secondly, *this call is of a very special character*, and I shall endeavor to show the manner in which it comes to us at this time. Thirdly, *this call, when it is really obeyed, puts the obedient upon a special footing*; they are henceforth peculiarly the Lord's. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation!

I. In the first place, THIS CALL IS OFTEN ONLY HALF OBEYED. It came to Abram when he dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees, but though he so far hearkened to it as to set out for Canaan, yet we read that "they came to Haran, and dwelt there."

We do not know *how* the call came to Abram, whether by a voice which he heard with his ears, or by a mysterious impulse upon his mind, or by a dream or vision, but Stephen tells us, in the seventh of Acts—"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." There may have been given to Abram some such sight of the glory of God as Job had when he cried, "Now my eye sees You." The Lord appeared to Abram, and made him to understand that he must emigrate from his country, and quit his tribe. Somehow or other, it was laid home to Abram's heart and conscience that he must go forth upon a journey he knew not where; he must journey into another land, and no more dwell in city, or town, or village, but become a sojourner with his God, a tent-dweller, a stranger in a strange land.

His first step would naturally be to tell his friends that he must leave them, for the living God had called him to go to the land of Canaan. At once his difficulties began. His kindred could not bear to part with him. If they had distinctly opposed him, and said, "It is absurd; your talk is insanity; yet if you must be gone, go your way and welcome;" then he would have gone in sadness, but assuredly he would not have hesitated. A man possessed of Abram's wondrous faith would have torn himself away with great firmness, although with deep regret at the sorrow which he caused. Had they opposed him, his course would have been plain.

But he had to meet with a much more insidious evil. His friends consented to his zeal. Whether they agreed in his reverence for Jehovah or not, they felt that they could not cut themselves off from Abram, and therefore they resolved to go with him. The word to Abram was express, "Get you out from your kindred, and from your father's house," but how was this to be done when his kindred and his father's house clung to him, and yielded to him? Very naturally his loving spirit could see no other way but to bid them all come with him, and yield themselves to God. Possibly Abram looked for great things from this, and rejoiced in it. It would seem as if his aged father Terah, with that wisdom which is a near to

subtlety, himself led the way in the migration, for we read—"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan." The father of the clan leads the way, and it is rather his migration than that of Abram. What was Abram to do? Instead of meeting opposition from his family, his own father is leading the way in the journey to Canaan. Did not this make his obedience easier? We shall see. Was not this happy union of the household, this undivided assent to the Lord's bidding, a great cause for rejoicing? It certainly appeared so, but all is not gold that glitters. What we think will help may at length hinder. What looks like a work of grace may turn out to be only the movements of unrenewed nature. Like the mixed multitude which came out of Egypt with Israel, we may have about us professed friends who may become our worst foes, in the secret of God's truth and grace.

In Abram's case the dreaded separation is spared; they start together for Canaan. So far so good; at least, it looks so. The traveling is wearisome, and many are the murmurings. The huge caravan has not gone very far before the proposal is made that they should be satisfied with the move which they had made and remain at Haran. True, it was not Canaan but it might do as well. Did not the family reason, "We shall stay here. We have yielded a great many points to Abram in coming away from Ur, but we cannot yield to all his demands. We have proved our love to him and our reverence for the Lord by coming thus far, and now we ask for a fair compromise. Abram is very sincere but he must not be bigoted. Surely he will not be so foolish as to believe in verbal inspiration, and insist upon Canaan, when Haran quite meets the spirit of the command. There is no doubt that Haran answers every purpose and we mean to stay here and Abram must stay with us." His father pleads that he is very old. To be moving continually is hard for aged people, and there is that broad Euphrates, how can the old man cross that dreaded flood? "Spare your venerable parent this last bitterness; I have come thus far to please you, do not press me further." I think I am not wildly imagining if I suppose that some such pleas induced the patriarch to tarry with his kindred at Haran. A loving and tender heart worked against prompt literal obedience, and for a while the man of faith delayed, the heir of the promises hesitated. Do you blame him? It will be wiser to look at home. Holy Scripture describes his conduct, and appends no absolute word of censure, but it does what is quite as significant, it keeps silent as to anything like a record of blessing, or of communion with God, while Abram was at the half-way house at Haran. To a friend of God His silence is quite enough of a rebuke. If my friend does not smile, I do not require him to frown to let me know whereabouts I am in his esteem. If my friend no longer speaks to me, I do not need him to upbraid me, his silence is sadly eloquent to my heart.

Abram and the rest settled down at Haran. He was conquered, not by open foes, but by compromising friends. My brethren, take good heed unto yourselves, that you suffer not your feet to be entangled by the men of your own household. He that would follow the Lamb wherever he goes must not know his own kindred when he comes to the parting of the ways. Honest wolves will not harm us one half so much as those who look like sheep, but inwardly are not so. Our first father, Adam, fell by the temptation of her whom he loved, and the old serpent still knows how to seduce through our affections and lead into ruin by the suggestion of friendship. O, man of God, beware! Read my parable with open eye, and practice the lesson thereof.

Let me describe the consequences of tarrying at any half-way house. *To obey the Lord partially is to disobey Him.* If the Lord bids Abram go to Canaan, he cannot fulfill that command by going to Haran. Haran was not mentioned in the call. You cannot keep God's command by doing something else which pleases you better. The essence of obedience lies in its exactness. Although something else may seem to you to be quite as good as the thing commanded, what has that to do with it? *This* is what God bids you, and to refuse the thing commanded, professing to substitute a better thing, is gross presumption. You may not think it so, but so it is, that half obedience is whole disobedience. We can only obey the Lord's command as it stands; to alter it is as great a treason as to make erasures in a king's statute-book. It is will-worship, and not God's worship, if I do what I choose of the Lord's work, and leave a part undone which does not please me quite so well.

Moreover, *half-way obedience increases our responsibility*, because it is a plain confession that we know the Lord's will, though we do it not. Abram had received the call, and knew that he had done so,

else why had he come to Haran? He admitted, by going as far as Haran, that he ought to go the whole way to Canaan, and so, by his own action he left himself without excuse. And any of you who are doing in a measure what is right because of the fear of God, and yet are acting in other matters contrary to what you know to be the Lord's will, you are left without apology for such neglect. By the service which you do render to God you admit that He has right to your obedience; why, then do you not obey Him in all things? You call Jesus your Lord, and do some of the things which He says, but why not the rest? Is it not clear that you know your Master's will and do it not? Thus, you see, there was failure in obedience, and increase of responsibility.

The result of this to Abram was the absence of privilege. God spoke not to His servant in Haran, neither dream, nor vision, nor voice came to him in the place of hesitancy. The Lord loved him, but hid His face from him, and denied him the visits of His grace. If we walk contrary to the Lord, He will walk contrary to us. Abram lived with his father Terah, but he was not living near his heavenly Father, and therefore he did not hear His voice. How greatly the true heart dreads this! How earnestly it sighs, "O Lord, be not silent to me, lest if You be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit"! O my brothers, let us not, by wavering and half-heartedness, lose our communion with the Lord our God.

Meanwhile, *Abram was rendering an affliction needful.* His father Terah must die that the cord which held Abram might be broken. If the called one will not come out while the old man lives, death must do his work, and remove the cause of disobedience. If Abram fears to weep at parting with a living father, he must weep over his grave. One way or another, the Lord will cause His chosen to obey Him. Oh, that we would be tender of heart, and not be as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding! Whips and rods would seldom be heard of if we were more promptly obedient.

While tarrying at Haran, *Abram was creating cause of future disquietude* by his attachment to Lot. He was told to come out from his kindred, but he clung to his orphan nephew, and must necessarily accept his company. Lot caused him a great deal of trouble. His herdsman created discontent and strife, and afterwards Lot, himself, was carried away captive, and peaceful Abram was compelled to gird on the warrior's sword, and go forth to battle, to rescue his nephew. Had Abram acted decidedly from the very first, he might have saved himself many a disquietude. My brethren, learn well these lessons. I merely hint them; will you not enlarge upon them?

All this while, *Abram was delaying the great blessing which God was prepared to give him.* He was keeping out of the Promised Land, and away from the place where Jehovah would manifest Himself to him, and enter into covenant with him. I fear that some true believers are depriving themselves of the richest joy and the most heavenly experience by their undecided conduct. Some of you have come away from your old sins, but you have not yet entered upon the new life in its fullness. You have left Ur of the Chaldees—the place of open sin, but you have not come to Canaan the holy. You are tarrying in the Haran of a partial obedience, which is neither here nor there—a sort of death in life, rebellion in obedience, unbelief in faith. I know many professors, who have left their vicious habits, but they are not yet consecrated to the Lord Jesus; they are not absolutely in the world, and yet they are not abiding in the Lord. Their speech is half of Ashdod and half of the Jews' language, they dare not be Philistines, and yet they will not be Israelites. They are willing to be saved by the cross of Christ, but they are not willing to take up Christ's cross, and come right out decidedly upon His side at all times. This is a perilous state to be in. They have enough religion to make them miserable, but I fear not enough to fit them for joys eternal. They may ultimately get into heaven by the skin of their teeth, at least, I hope so, but they have no present joy, no immediate peace, no conscious fellowship with God. Half-way house godliness is wretched stuff; beware of it! Remember what we read of the mongrels that dwelt in Israel's land, which had been brought there by the Assyrian conqueror. They feared the Lord, and served other gods, and, therefore, Jehovah sent lions among them. Let all who are of that race remember the lions, for the Lord will not suffer such double-minded ones to live in peace before Him.

Thus much, then, upon my first point; the divine call is too often only half obeyed.

II. Secondly, THIS CALL, ESPECIALLY AS IT COMES TO US, IS OF A VERY PECULIAR CHARACTER.

To us, of course, it is wholly *spiritual*. We are not called today to leave our country and our kindred, so far as our residence is concerned, but it seems to me that we are called to a much more difficult posi-

tion than that, namely, to stay on the old spot, among old friends, and yet to lead a wholly new life. Of course, we are to quit all evil company, but we are not to leave the society of our fellow men, nor to go out of the world. Even Abram was not called to be an ascetic, or to live in a cave, or to retire into the desert like a hermit. Within the borders of his own encampment Abram was a man among men, and pursued his daily calling as the keeper of great flocks of sheep, and herds of oxen, and camels, and so forth. Towards his neighbors he behaved himself with noble-minded independence and integrity. He was a pattern of what grace can make of a really noble man when he moves among those who are strangers to his God. But yet, beloved, Abram did, to a great extent, dwell in a favorable condition. He lived apart from the grosser sort, he was not wearied with the voices of a city, as Lot was; his own tents, and the many tents of his servants, made up quite a settlement, where God's name was revered, and the fear of the Lord was felt. That canvas town had one over it of whom the Lord said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Some of us can almost seclude our families, but many others have a far harder task, they have to live in the city amid its sins, and yet not to be of it, they have in their earthly callings to come into daily contact with the ungodly, and yet they have to be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. As Abram was no Canaanite, though he sojourned in Canaan, so are we to prove ourselves to be of a totally distinct race. This is a very difficult piece of business. How great a wonder was asked by our Savior's prayer—"I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil"! Not by difference in brogue, nor by peculiarity in dress, are we to be marked out as the servants of God, but our lives must be so Christ-like and pure, that men shall say of us, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth, for your life betrays you." This call, then, is of a deeply spiritual and peculiar character. My brother, have you heard it? My sister, have you heard it? Have you endeavored to obey it to the full? It means just this—that we are to flee all sin, without exception, and follow after everything that is pure and holy, without exception. Others wallow in what they call the pleasures of sin; abhor such things, and protest against them. Shun, also, everything that is doubtful, for, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If you are not sure it is right, it is sin to you. Avoid the appearance of evil. Separate yourself from all that which Christ would have disapproved. Be so decided, also, as to leave everything that is hesitating. Be out-and-out for Jesus. While many will try to run both with the hare and the hounds, make it your object to abhor that which is evil and to cleave to that which is good. Make a point of wearing your regimentals. Be dead and buried to this present evil world with its frivolities, philosophies, and grandeurs. Regard the world as crucified to you, and be yourself crucified to it. The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Go without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. In matters of religion follow the Lord fully, let the Word of God be your sole and sure rule, and nothing else. That religion which is not according to God's Word is a false religion. Accept neither doctrine nor ceremony for which there is no scriptural warrant. Search the Word about it all, "to the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Follow your conscience, as your conscience is enlightened by the Spirit of God concerning His Word, follow the Word even in its jots and tittles. Make not too much of peculiarities in comparison with vital and fundamental truths, but, still, even with these less weighty matters, take heed that you do not trifle, lest in neglecting the less you learn to neglect the greater, and so become guilty of the great transgression. Avoid the world's religion, for if there is one world worse than another, it is the Christian world. No enemies of Israel were as bitter as their brethren the Edomite; brethren in name only become the fiercest of foes. Be distinctly removed from the religion which is based upon self-will, pride of intellect, and worldly conformity. The world's religion is as evil as the world's irreligion. Surrender to the plain teaching of the Spirit of God, and resolve in all things to follow your Lord wherever He may lead you. Stand alone, if others will not obey. In your house let there be an altar for God, if there is not another in the land. Make a covenant with God through the one great Sacrifice, even if all others forget the Savior.

See, dear friends, what the call is, and then remember that *it comes to the believer from God Himself*. The Lord calls His servants unto the separated life, and because of His authority they are bound to obey. He calls by His Word, either preached or read, it comes to the individual by an application of the Spirit of God, so that the man yields cheerful assent. He is drawn, and therefore he runs. Such a person feels it a pleasure to take Christ for his example, and to put his feet down in the very tracks of the Lord Jesus. It

is ours to follow the Lord's precept and example with great care and solemn determination, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. It was so with Abram; is it so with you?

Because this call comes from God, *it has for us a supreme authority*. We follow our Lord even when darkness is round about Him, though we know not the way, we know the Lord, and therefore we follow Him implicitly. To us the Word of God is more than the decrees of emperors, or the statutes of senators. If this thing were of men, if this thing were ordained by a learned council, or a reverend bench, it would be of small account in our eyes, but when He that made us and redeemed us speaks to us, we can only reply, "Help Your servants to do Your will, for Your will is our delight."

My brethren, if we thus separate ourselves unto obedience, *we must expect violent opposition*. Severe criticism will not be spared us. Of course, some will say, "The man is mad"; others more gently will murmur, "He is sadly misled." Many will accuse you of a liking to be singular, or a weakness for going to extremes, or a self-righteous wish to excel others, or of having "a bee in your bonnet." Accusers will hint that you are seeking your own in some form or other, and if they cannot quite see a motive, they will imagine one. What is the use of imagination if it will not help a man out when his facts run short? Having once made up their mind that you are foolish and contemptible, they will view all your conduct through colored glasses, and condemn you up and down. Be not dismayed, but endure hardness for the love of Jesus.

To go forth and lead a separated life *will need faith*, and to have faith you will need the grace of God. Believe that God's command is right, and believe that He will justify you in fulfilling it. Believe that God's promise is true, and that He will prove it so. Abram was bidden to go, and he went. Look at Abram's case, and see how impossible it was for him to obey apart from faith in God. He was to go away from all that was dear, from all that was comfortable and settled; he was to go he knew not where, and he was to go to obtain an inheritance for a son that was not born, and that was not likely ever to be born, for he was old, and Sarai was well stricken in years. Only faith could enable him to obey a call which looked so like a delusion. We need faith in every step of a holy life. Oh for more looking unto Jesus, more child-like dependence upon God! If you believe, you will do the Lord's will, but if you do not believe, you will refuse to obey, and miss the blessing.

Suppose we do obey the divine call, what then? Will our course be smooth ever afterwards? Far from it. The walk of the separated believer *involves trial*. The trial of Abram in leaving his country was but one, out of ten which are recorded. It is written, "In the world you shall have tribulation." In the Lord's vineyard the knife is used if nowhere else. The Lord tried Abram, and He will try us; it is a part of the process of love by which He prepares us for the eternal rest. The course of true faith never does run smooth. If you will obey the divine call you shall be favored with more trials, you shall be honored with still greater tests of your fidelity, but then you shall be known as the friend of God, and God shall make you to be a blessing to others even to the end of time. Mark well what is proposed to you—that God shall take you, and give you His light, and His truth, and His salvation, that you may preserve it for all the ages, until Christ shall come. Are you willing to accept so high an honor? Will you count the cost, and make your calling and election sure? Will you cry with Esaias, "Here am I! Send me"? As the Roman consul devoted himself to death in battle for the sake of the beloved city, will you devote yourself to God, and His cause, and truth? In very deed such is my spirit. I wish there were ten thousand who would say the same. O my brother, blessed are you among men, if you are set apart for God and truth. Yes my sister, blessed are you among women, if you are following the Lord fully in the way of His will.

III. This brings me to my third and last point. **THIS CALL, WHEN IT IS OBEYED, PUTS US ON SPECIAL GROUND.**

For, first, *God is bound to justify the course which He Himself commands*. When Abram went to Canaan at the Lord's bidding and remained there, the responsibility was with the Lord. If any evil had come of Abram's conduct he could not have blamed himself. It was neither his own wisdom nor his own folly which led him; God alone was his director. It is mine to obey; it is God's to prove that my obedience is wise. What peace this brings! O my hearer, if you believe in Christ with all your heart, and if you become a sincere follower of Jesus in all things, God will justify you in doing so, for you do it at His bidding. If there is any folly in holiness, the folly is not with you, but with Him that bade you be holy. The servant is accountable for any action he does of his own head, but not for that which he does by the

command of his principal. So you, in keeping close to God's will, are not accountable for consequences; the consequences must lie with God. As surely as wisdom is justified of her children, so is God justified of all believers; yes, and He justifies believers, and their faith is counted unto them for righteousness. Therefore, beloved, we stand on the ground of justification when we obey the call of God.

We cease, also, from that moment to be of the world. God deals with the world one way, but with His separated ones in another way. "Them that are without, God judges," but those who are within are not under law, but under grace. It is the joy of faith that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. There is discipline now within the House of God, but it is not that of a court of justice, but of the abode of love. The Lord chastens His children, that they may not be condemned with the world. The separated ones are not numbered among the people of the earth. When you read of the seven trumpets, and vials, and plagues, fear not, for nothing shall by any means hurt you. When the blood shall flow in the day of vengeance up to the horses' bridles, then shall not a hair of your head perish, for the Lord secures those who are sealed to Him. Babylon must fall, that lies hard by Ur of the Chaldees, from where you came, and all that bear the mark of the beast shall die, even as Terah died in Haran, but as for you, "at destruction and famine you shall laugh." No evil shall touch you, for the Lord is your keeper. If you are walking in the separated path with God, and are setting Him always before you, you shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. What a condition to be in! First justified, and then secured from the doom which will surely fall upon the guilty world.

Now, as free grace has separated you unto God, *you come into an honored fellowship with Him.* Abram, in his tent, had God for his companion. He had near and clear manifestations of God; he entertained angels unawares, and with those angels was the Son of God Himself. If you quit the world to abide with God, God Himself will abide with you. If you come out from the unclean world, the Lord has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them. I will be a father unto them, and they shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty." Oh, rest you in this sweet fact, that the Triune God will manifest Himself to His chosen as He does not to the world. You shall be one of the people near unto Him.

By coming out from the world, and following the Lord closely, *we come under the divine care and protection.* How wonderfully Abram was screened from evil! Jehovah was his shield. He was a stranger in the midst of enemies, but they did not molest him; an awe was upon them, for Jehovah had said, "Touch not My anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Wherever a true saint goes, the Lord lays His commands on all the powers of nature and all the angels of heaven to take care of him. When Abram was at peace God blessed him in all things, and if he went to war, God gave his enemies as driven stubble to his bow. If we are with God, God is with us. When God's will is our delight, God's providence is our inheritance. It is not so with you all; no, not even with all of you who profess to be Christians, but it is so with those of you who keep close to God's Word, and follow in will, in spirit, in belief, and in act, the example of His dear Son. O beloved, let us strive after this! Let us aim at perfect conformity to the will of God, for this will place us in quiet nearness to God.

Henceforth *Abram was for God's use only.* God treated him as His confidant, as the receiver of heavenly revelations, and as the founder of a race. God will also use us, if we will come where He can use us. Vessels set apart for the Master's use must not be used by the servants. God is a great King, and when He selects a cup for His own table, He will not have it used by others. If other lips drink out of the chalice of your life, the Lord disdains you. You must be for Him only, or you are not His spouse. If you are His from the crown of your head to the sole of your foot by solemn consecration, He will honor you yet more and more; yes, you know not to what high ends He has ordained you, both in this life and in the ages to come. But look you well to this, that you be holiness unto the Lord.

One more thought presses itself upon my heart; the man who for Christ's sake has cut all his moorings, and separated himself from the world, to follow the Lamb, has learned how to live, but he has also learned how to die. We die unto the world, and thereby learn to die. When we cease to trust in riches, when we resign our comforts, when we no longer lean on friends, when all things visible become as shadows to us, then we make a rehearsal of death. Unless the Lord Himself shall soon descend from heaven with a shout, we shall all die. Yes, the hour of our departure hastens on. Then we shall have to cut ourselves loose from our moorings, be they what they may. Soon shall we hear this word from heaven, "Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I

will show you.” This will be our summons to the better Canaan, the land that flows with milk and honey. We shall depart out of this world to face an unknown eternity, but we shall by no means dread the migration. He that has crossed the great river, the river Euphrates, will not fear the Jordan. To give up the world will be no new thing for you or for me; we have given it up many times already. We have frequently given up everything into the Lord's hands in real earnest, and we can readily do it once more. We live here as strangers and sojourners, and we find little to charm us in this foreign land. Our treasure is above, and it will be a joy for our souls to rise to the place where our hearts already dwell. We cannot be sorry to quit a dead world. Who loves to sit in a morgue? If we tremble to leave kindred and friends, yet let us remember that we have already quit them in spirit. Let us journey, as Abram did, towards the south, that is to say, let us get still further away from the old abode. Let us make for the heart of Immanuel's land. Let us press towards the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, and rest not till we stand in our lot and behold Him whom Abram saw with gladness.

The one question I finish with is—Do you know anything about this? Have you ever felt this divine call? If so, make your calling and election sure. Carry out the separating ordinance to the full. Some of us had to take very decided steps at our first starting, but we began aright. We have been called since to equally painful courses, but we hope to keep right. Anything is better than a wound in the conscience. If we keep close to Christ, we shall find rest unto our souls. We look back without regret to what we may have suffered by decision; counting it less than nothing for the joy that was set before us. We wish that all our converts would be out-and-out in their course of life. O you who by grace are beginners in the heavenly life, make a strong resolve—“We will be the servants of God, and endeavor in all things to obey Him.” Since God made you, and by the blood of His dear Son redeemed you, it is yours to be doubly the Lord's. There are the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; are these yours? Make sure on that point, and if they are yours, yield yourself to Jesus, and from this day forward, do His bidding without question or delay. Quit everything contrary to the Lord's mind and will; at all cost be true, then shall the Lord be your delight, and His service shall be your heaven below. If you are now separated unto Him, you shall find your reward in that day when He shall divide the sheep from the goats, for then you shall be placed at His right hand, to hear Him say, “Come, you blessed of My Father.” May you be the children of believing Abram for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 11:27-32, 12:1-5;
JOSHUA 24:1-3; ACTS 7:1-5; HEBREWS 11:8-11**

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